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VIR CHAKRA CONFERRED ON ABHINANDAN VARTHAMAN

India's third highest wartime gallantry medal was given for showing "exceptional sense of duty", the award citation said

DOWNED PAK F-16 RAISED MORALE OF FORCES

President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday conferred the award (pic) on Group Captain Abhinandan Varthaman, who downed a Pak F-16 a day after the Balakot surgical strike in 2019, ejected from his MiG-21 after it was hit in enemey territory and was held captive there for three days. The citation said his action raised the morale of India's armed forces

OTHER AWARDS

The Gallantry awards included included two Kirti Chakras (one posthumous), one Vir Chakra and 23 Shaurya Chakras (10 posthumous)

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Anti-Conversion Bill to be tabled in next session

Draft to be ready by Dec 5, says minister; CM indicates party will discuss the issue

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

THE State government is likely to introduce the Anti-Conversion Bill in the next legislature session in Belagavi beginning from December 13. Home Minister Araga Jnanendra said that the government is keen to pass the Bill and the draft is expected to be ready by December 5.

Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand have already passed such laws and Karnataka is studying them, he told The New Indian Express. "We are also consulting legal experts and preparing the draft. We want to bring it in the next legislature session and we are working towards it," he added.

> The bill is to take action against those who convert people forcibly. The law and order situation is getting affected because of such conversions
>
> Araga Jnanendra, Karnataka Home Minister

On Archbishop Peter Machado, who has written to Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai opposing the proposed bill, Jnanendra said that Machado and his team met him. "I told them this law has nothing to do with any religion and that no one from any religion should be worried. The bill is to take action against those who convert people forcibly. The law and order situation is getting affected because of such conversions. As it involves an emotional factor, it disturbs harmony in society. There have been clashes between communities and the government cannot sit idle. Forcible conversions have to be banned. This does not mean that the government will restrict prayers and other religious practices. We accept all religions," he added.

At another event, Bommai told the media on Monday that the issue will be discussed within the party.

When the chief minister's statement was brought to his notice, Jnanendra said that he will get the draft bill ready and take the opinions and suggestions of party leaders and get their approval. "We want to introduce and pass the bill in this session. There is a high chance of the bill getting passed. We are skeptical only because the duration of the session is just ten days," he added.

Recently, heads of several mutts, including Santhosh Guruji, Siddalinga Swami and Pranavananda Swami, met Bommai, urging him to ban religious conversions in the state.

The issue of anti-conversion bill was raised in the previous session by BJP MLA Gulihatti Shekar, who alleged that religious conversions are rampant in Chitradurga and said that his mother had converted to Christianity. Jnanedra had then said the government is proposing to bring in a law to control forcible conversions.

Slew of dissent notes in JPC report on personal data bill

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

A Joint Committee of Parliament (JPC) that was examining the Personal Data Protection Bill, adopted its report on Monday though its Opposition members like Congress' Jairam Ramesh and Manish Tewari and Trinamool's Derek O'Brien and Mahua Moitra submitted separate dissent notes.

However, Ramesh was generous in his appreciation of the democratic manner in which the committee functioned under the chairmanship of BJP leader P P Chaudhary. "Finally, it is done. The Joint Committee of Parliament has adopted its report on the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019. There are dissent notes, but that is in the best spirit of parliamentary democracy. Sadly, such examples are few and far between under the Modi regime."

In his two-page dissent note, the Congress chief whip in the Rajya Sabha argued that Section 35 of the bill gives almost unbridled powers to the Centre to exempt any government agency from the entire Act itself. "Under the amendment I had suggested, the Central government will have to get Parliamentary approval for exempting any of its agencies from the purview of the law. Even then, the government must always comply with the bill's requirement of fair and reasonable processing and implementing the necessary security safeguards," he said.

Midway change of head

"We started in December 2019 and finished in November 2021," Tewari said. The report got delayed because the panel's former head Meenakshi Lekhi got a ministrial berth. Chaudhary was then appointed as its new chairperson

Ramesh argued that the JCP report allows a period of two years for private companies to migrate to the new data protection regime, but governments and government agencies have no such stipulation and that the constitutional right to privacy arises only where operations and activities of private companies are concerned.

Tewari, in his very detailed dissent note, said, "I do not agree with the fundamental design and construction of the bill." He said he is not in sync with many of the proposed clauses and suggested clause by clause amendments. He added that in its present form, the bill would not withstand legal scrutiny.

BOATS OUT IN BENGALURU

Karnataka Fire and Emergency Services personnel use a raft to evacuate stranded residents of Kendriya Vihar apartment complex, which was flooded due to heavy rain overnight and also a breach in the adjacent Yelahanka lake, in Bengaluru on Monday | SHRIRAM BN | P2

EXPRESS READ

India's GDP may grow 8.1%: Report

Mumbai: India's GDP is likely to grow around 8.1 per cent in the second quarter of the current financial year and in the range of 9.3-9.6 per cent during fiscal 2022, according to an SBI research report.

No restraining order on Malik: HC

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Monday refused to pass interim orders to restrain minister Nawab Malik from making statements on social media against NCB Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede.

Ex-cop charged for Easter bombings

Colombo: Sri Lanka's former police chief Pujith Jayasundera was on Monday indicted with 855 charges of criminal negligence in the 2019 Easter Sunday terror attack that killed 270 people.

Compensation within 24 hrs to farmers: CM

V VELAYUDHAM @ Kolar

AS heavy rain and floods have caused massive damage to standing crops across the state, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Monday said that the compensation to farmers, who have suffered such damage, will be deposited into their accounts within 24 hours of their details being uploaded onto the government website. As per preliminary reports, standing crops in over 5 lakh hectares have been damaged, Bommai said.

After getting first-hand information about the extent of damage in Kolar and Bengaluru Rural districts, the chief minister said there will be no delay in giving compensation to farmers who have sustained losses.

"We have told the officials to immediately start the survey to assess the damage. Every day, officials will upload details on the Parihara website and we will ensure that farmers get the compensation within 24 hours of details being uploaded," he said.

Standing instructions have been given to all deputy commissioners to provide details of rain-related damage, and funds will be moved directly to their bank accounts, he said.

₹685 crore that is lying in the personal deposit accounts of deputy commissioners already will be used to provide immediate relief to those affected. ₹500 crore has been released to take up relief works, he added. CONTINUED ON: P7

MORE RAIN LIKELY

The Meteorological Department has predicted heavy rain in another four to five days. All deputy commissioners, superintendents of police and zilla panchayat chief executive officers have been instructed to take all appropriate measures, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said. On the demand to increase the compensation amount, he said that discussions have already ben held and the Centre will take a decision soon.

SHAHRUKH
TAKES TAMIL NADU TO VICTORY

M Shahrukh Khan smashed a dramatic last ball six to help Tamil Nadu defend the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 title with a thrilling four-wicket win over Karnataka in the summit clash here on Monday. P13

NATIONWIDE	NOV 21	NOV 22
Fresh cases	10,488	8,488
Recoveries	12,329	12,510
Deaths	313	249

KARNATAKA	NOV 21	NOV 22
Fresh cases	247	178
Recoveries	1	2
Deaths	278	373

JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
November 21: 32,70,520 doses
November 22: 63,98,165 doses
TOTAL DOSES: 117,54,69,625

Mahesh Joshi new Sahitya Parishat prez

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

FORMER Additional Director General of Doordarshan Mahesh Joshi is set to become the president of 106-year-old Kannada Sahitya Parishat, polls for which were held on Sunday.

Of the total 3.04 lakh voters, 1.59 lakh cast their franchise on Sunday. Of the 21 contestants in fray for the president's post, Joshi got 68,525 votes, Va Ch Channegowda 16,755, CK Ramegowda 14,100, Mayanna 8,791, Saraswathi Shivappa 6,471 and Rajashekara Mulaali 5,209 votes.

Joshi served as the additional director-general of Doordarshan, Delhi and South India. He is a recipient of many awards, including Nadoja, President's Home Guards and Civil Defence Medal for Meritorious Service.

The Parishat president's term is for five years.

In a series of tweets, Joshi thanked his voters, saying, "I want to make Kannada Sahitya Parishat, a commoners Parishat." CONTINUED ON: P7

ANDHRA CM TAKES A STEP BACK ON 3 CAPITALS IN STATE

KALYAN THOLETI @ Vijayawada

IN a surprise move, the Jagan Mohan Reddy government in Andhra Pradesh on Monday withdrew the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of all Regions Act and the Capital Region Development Authority Repeal Act (the three capitals Acts), citing "suspicions, misconceptions and legal hurdles" created by some elements, indirectly pointing fingers at the opposition TDP.

Nonetheless, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy made it crystal clear that his government will come up with a "better and comprehensive" legislation, indicating that he hasn't dropped the three capitals move altogether.

Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, the finance minister of Andhra Pradesh, tabled the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of all Regions Repeal Act-2021 in the Assembly, which passed it by a voice vote. Making a statement on the floor of the House, Jagan said, "The three capitals — legislative in Amaravati, executive in Visakhapatnam and judiciary in Kurnool — were sought to be set up to ensure balanced development of all the regions including the backward North Andhra and Rayalaseema regions."

"Several suspicions were sowed, misconceptions and legal hurdles created.... good intentions of the government were ignored and an argument was advanced that injustice was meted out to some," he said. Stating that the government was withdrawing the three capitals Acts in larger public interest, he said it will return to the House with a better and comprehensive bill and incorporate in it answers to all legal questions.

Significantly, Jagan said the government will "explain to all sections of people and all the regions, extensively and exhaustively, the need for decentralisation of development". Briefly touching on the earlier TDP government's plan to build a brand new Amaravati capital city, Jagan said it would cost ₹1 lakh crore and with time, the cost might escalate to ₹5-6 lakh crore and wondered if the State could afford it.

Visakhapatnam, on the other hand, has everything and could be the capital with a little bit of expenditure, he observed. CONTINUED ON: P7

INHUMAN ACT

Wildlife crimes surge, make Karnataka a hub again

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

FIFTY-two rose-ringed parakeets were seized by the police in Bengaluru on March 29 and sacks filled with nearly 50 monkeys, most of them dead, were found dumped on the main road in Hassan on July 28. In a span of three days, on November 13 and 16, 571 star tortoises were found abandoned at two different bus stands in Bengaluru.

These are just some of the major crimes involving wildlife that have been reported in Karnataka, which is home to some of the best-maintained sanctuaries in the country. The state had been witnessing a decline in such crimes since early 2000s when it had peaked during the heydays of forest brigand Veerappan, who was slain in October 2005. But worryingly, there has been a surge in recent times and it is being blamed on poor investigation and lack of coordination among different agencies.

CRIMES IN THE WILD PART 1

As per data, which is still being compiled, the forest vigilance wing alone has booked 565 wildlife crime and timber cases this year. Last year, it was 578, while the year before that it was 778. Forest and police officials fear that the numbers may only go up when the final data sheet comes out.

The Covid pandemic, related job loss, inflation, demand for quick money, myths, traditional medicine, lack of patience, rising man-animal conflicts and even adrenaline rush are being cited as reasons for wildlife crimes, which is the second largest illegal trade globally after narcotics, wildlife experts told *TNIE*.

Conservationists and members of Traffic, a leading NGO working on wildlife trade along with the state government, are documenting each case and preparing a report on the rising trends.

> It cannot be ruled out too, as cases of elephant poaching and deaths are occurring. But cases of elephant tail hair being used in making rings and necklaces are not coming to light.
>
> Wildlife expert

Higher frequency and more number of interceptions and catches by forest officials point to a surge in wildlife crimes. Such cases include seizure of 9 kg of pangolin scales on October 22, the arrest of three poachers from Chikkaballapur on November 16 for slaughtering a deer for venison (deer meat), and the recovery of 20 pairs of antlers or deer horns on November 18 by Bengaluru police. CONTINUED ON: P7

One of the elephants which was electrocuted this year in Karnataka